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ABSTRACT

An 8-month practicum addressed the adverse feelings for writing (shown in responses to a writing survey) of 30 intermediate-level students. Ten students from each grade level (third, fourth, and fifth) with the lowest scores completed the practicum activities. Students viewed a film for the first strategy. The students' reactions to the film served as the basis for a brainstorming activity. One of the concepts was used to develop a story. Students had the option of using one of the concepts that had been generated from the brainstorming activity or coming up with one of their own as they wrote stories. Some stories were written in groups of six, while others were done in pairs. Students had small group conferences to make corrections. Corrected work was typed, illustrated, and bound. Completed work was bound by the practicum leader. A visual was used for the second strategy--clustering. The procedure described for brainstorming was again followed. Freewriting was the final strategy. At the end of the practicum, most of the students had shown improved attitudes toward writing as documented by their responses to the post-writing survey. Those students whose scores remained the same seemed to change their attitude toward one or more areas on the survey. (Five tables and 11 figures of data are included; 24 references, the questionnaire, the letter to former participants, and a memorandum to schools are attached.)
(Author/RS)

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Nurturing Writing Attitudes through Collaboration across the Intermediate Grades

by

Flora I. McKenzie

Cluster 38

A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1992

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APPROVAL PAGE

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Brenda Edwards
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August 12, 1992
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Flora I. McKenzie under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Sept. 6, 1992
Date of Final Approval of Report

Wm. W. Anderson
William W. Anderson, Ed.D., Advisor

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My final words of thanks are extended to the boys and girls who were the practicum participants. Your receptive responses to this project have given me the courage to share writing activities with other students.

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ABSTRACT

Nurturing Writing Attitudes through Collaboration across the Intermediate Grades. McKenzie, Flora I., 1992: Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Descriptors: Writing Processes/ Writing Research/Writing Improvement/Writing Evaluation/ Writing Instruction/Writing Development/Writing Attitudes/ Writing Strategies/Children's Writing/Collaborative Writing/Collaborative Learning/Word Processing/Revision (Written Composition)

The problem for this eight-month practicum was that there were 30 intermediate students who had adverse feelings for writing. The problem was documented as a result of responses to a writing survey by Donato (1990). The survey was administered to a group of 71 students. The highest possible score was 30. Ten students from each grade level (third, fourth and fifth) with the lowest scores completed the practicum activities.

Students viewed a film for the first strategy. Following the film, the students were guided through a brainstorming activity. The students' reactions to the film served as the basis for a brainstorming activity. One of the concepts was used to develop a story. Students had the option of using one of the concepts that had been generated from the brainstorming activity or coming up with one of their own as they wrote stories. Some stories were written by children who worked in groups of six. Others were done in pairs. Students had small group conferences to make corrections. Corrected work was typed (using desktop publishing for children) and illustrated. Completed work was bound by the writer.

A visual was used for the second strategy, clustering. The same procedure described for brainstorming was followed. This time, students did their own typing of corrected work. Freewriting was the final strategy. Practicum participants were able to complete this strategy without seeing a film.

At the end of the practicum, most of the students had shown improved attitiudes toward writing as documented by their responses to the post-writing survey. Those students whose scores remained the same seemed to change their attitude toward one or more areas on the survey.

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies, I do ⊠ do not ( ) give permission to Nova University to distribute copies of this practicum report upon request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiching, handling, and mailing of the materials.

August 12, 1992 Flora J. McKenzie

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The work setting was a public school that was built in the early part of this century. When the school was constructed, the site included a two-story building. Over the years, the student population increased to a maximum of 1,000. The steady increase resulted in 16 additional classrooms. Eleven of the classrooms are mobile units that could be removed if there were a drastic reduction in the student population.

Some of the classrooms were made a permanent part of the site. There was a kindergarten building that was used to house two classes. The teachers' work area had been converted to an office for the school's guidance counselor. The tiled area was used as the office space for a team of one teacher and two paraprofessionals. This team spearheaded a new program for parents of children from zero through three years of age. The program included an organizational design that enabled the team to do hands-on activities with parents. The area that was designated proved to be inadequate; therefore, the program had to be moved to the neighborhood middle school.

This school was used by residents in the community from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The hours of operation on Friday were 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Some boys and girls arrived to school as early as 7:30 a.m. There were two board employees who provided supervised recreational activities from 7:30 a.m. to 8:20 a.m. (when students were picked up by their teachers).

There was an after school program that was operated by the community school. Boys and girls had supervised homework time, art activities, and indoor or outdoor games. The community school provided programs for the other students, too. There was a special tutoring program for those whose native language was Creole. This group received instruction in skills from the content areas in their native language. Tutoring services were offered to students in third through fifth grade who were fluent in English. This group involved students who had been identified by their teachers as those who could benefit from extra help in reading and mathematics.

Students who attended this work site had the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities that were promoted through the community school. Ballet classes were offered one day each week. Drama classes were offered to every grade level for an hour and a half each week. Piano lessons, cheerleader classes and intramural sports were also available.

The adults in this neighborhood attended classes four nights a week from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Many of these individuals took advantage of opportunities to learn English as a second language. Once they had developed some mastery of the language, some of these adults took classes that would enable them to earn a graduate equivalence degree (GED). Some of the adults who earned a GED chose to advance their careers by enrolling in a 2-year or 4-year college program.

The boys and girls who attended this institution had educational experiences provided by a variety of teachers;

Table 1

Teacher Distribution

Pre-K	2
First Grade	6
Kindergarten	5
Third Grade	5
Fourth Grade	4
Fifth Grade	3
Languages (included are English for Speakers of Other Languages, Spanish for Speakers of Spanish, Spanish as a Second Language and Basic Curriculum in the Native Language)	5.5
Art	1
Music	1
Physical Education	1.5
Reading	1
Lead Teacher	1
Speech Therapist	.5
Guidance Counselor	1
Media Specialist	1
Exceptional Education (Learning disabled, varying exceptionalities)	4

NOTE: .5 means the personnel is shared with other schools

this information is presented in Table 1. The data in Table 2 represents the other adults who contributed to the smooth operation of the school.

Table 2

Non-Teaching Personnel

Assigned Position	Number in Position
Principal	1
Assistant Principals (1 day and 1 evening)	2
Psychologist	.5
Placement Specialist (resource person for students recommended for any exceptional program)	.5
Clerical	4
Paraprofessionals	11
School Monitors	2
Custodial	5
Food Service Team	12
Parent Outreach Personnel (a teacher and 3 paraprofessionals)	4

The data in Table 3 represents the student population during the final stage of this practicum. Faculty members were advised during the fall that three of the elementary schools in the feeder pattern had enrolled all the students that they could accommodate. Therefore, new students moving in the areas were to be bussed to the writer's workplace. The numbers in parentheses represent the change in enrollment per grade level. These figures are not indicative of the increase of previous years.

Table 3

Student Distribution

Grade	Number Enrolled		
	September	June	
Pre-K	40	40	(0)
Kindergarten	110	113	(3)
First	141	152	(11)
Second	119	123	(4)
Third	124	127	(3)
Fourth	111	124	(13)
Fifth	92	100	(8)
Self-contained Exceptional Education	30	34	(4)

The socioeconomic status of the community was low. Some of the students were members of single-parent families. If that single parent were employed, the position was usually one that required minimal education. Therefore, the wages earned made it difficult for parents to provide food, shelter, and clothing for their children without the assistance of federal dollars.

According to the cafeteria manager, 692 students (85% of the population) applied for and were approved for assistance in the meal program offered by the school's district. This meal program included breakfast and/or lunch. Students received their meals on a sliding scale that was determined by data submitted on the meal form.

Boys and girls who attended school at the practicum site received federal funds that assisted in their academic encounters, too. During the spring of 1991, a writing committee was established. The committee's major goal was to compose a written plan that specified how school personnel felt resources could be used to assist the student body.

As a result of that meeting, funds were allocated to employ two full-time paraprofessionals; one for the alternative education program and one for the computer laboratory. Part-time or hourly paraprofessionals were hired to reduce the pupil:adult ratio. There were five teaching positions generated based on the number of students who were eligible for Chapter I. One position was for a reading laboratory teacher; the others were classroom teachers.

The faculty and staff made many efforts to provide a learning setting that was well-rounded for boys and girls. Monies were provided for supplies and materials (e.g., manipulatives, kits, language masters) as well as equipment (e.g., computer, printer). A predetermined amount was set aside for pupil transportation so that students could attend field trips and other extracurricular activities.

The district identified four instruments that were used to determine which students generated Chapter I funds. Kindergarten students had the Brigance Kindergarten

Inventory (1982) administered to them in the language that they were most proficient. First through fifth graders' scores on a standardized test were used to identify Chapter I students. Students who had scores at the 49th percentile or less on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) (1986) that was given during the spring of 1991 or the Metropolitan Achievement Test6 (MAT6) (1986) that was given to students who did not have SAT scores were identified as Chapter I students. Students in grades one through five who were limited speakers of English did not have SAT or MAT6 scores determine their eligibility. Instead, these students were evaluated through the use of a skills checklist that was administered in the child's native language. Seventy-one percent of the students met the Chapter I guidelines.

The writer's interpretation of the practicum site being a school-wide Chapter I facility was as follows: The federal government had realized that the students were disadvantaged economically and educationally. Two meals were provided to help with the economic conditions. Human and material resources were provided to help with the educational conditions. This assistance was provided to help students make educational achievements.

The school had a new alternative program that consisted of two classes. The original plan was for one alternative program and one career lab. The career lab was not available. Another alternative education unit was

offered as a replacement. Therefore, identified students in grades three, four and five were able to work in smaller classroom settings that had adults who were cognizant of their various learning styles. The small number of students enabled the adults to address the special needs of the groups.

All fifth graders were housed in one common area. The purpose of this assignment was to provide an atmosphere that would be most conducive for students who needed to move from room to room for instruction. Fifth graders participated in a form of cross-grouping for mathematics and reading. However, instead of the students moving from room to room; the teachers moved.

Some schools in the district participated in another innovative program. Once again, the administrative team found a program that seemed feasible to the community. The original intent was to house the program at the writer's work site. However, the availability of space became a problem. Therefore, the program was moved to the middle school that was approximately a mile away. There was a team of one teacher and two paraprofessionals who served as advisors for parents of children from zero to three years of age. Parents received information that ranged from health and nutrition to cognitive activities that were developmentally appropriate for their child/ren. Adults were taking advantage of opportunities to help parents take

the necessary steps that would enable them to become involved. It was believed that the skills learned by parents would help them prepare their children for preschool; thereby, enabling the students to enter the school setting ready to continue their cognitive growth.

There was a foster grandparent program at the writer's workplace. Ten senior citizens served as mentors. This total represented an increase of three. This was the first time that the students at this site had the experience of working with a foster grandfather. The response of the students to a male figure was positive.

The school family welcomed the foster-grandparents. These mentors came to the workplace daily. Students who were promoted to another grade and no longer had the mentors in their classroom still greeted them with a "Hello grandmother".

There was another group who had become very visible this year. Parents were encouraged to become involved in the school. The responses of the parents were encouraging. Parents displayed a willingness to assist as needed.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer was the reading laboratory teacher at the workplace. One of the five teaching positions purchased with Chapter I funds was that of the reading laboratory teacher.

This year, the total school implemented whole language as an approach for reading instruction. The reading series used was published by Harcourt-Brace-Jovanovich (HBJ). Students in grades kindergarten through second used HBJ during the 1990-1991 school year. Informal conversations with two of the third grade teachers (both of whom happened to have had students targeted as limited speakers of English) suggested that their students who participated in HBJ as part of the pilot were better prepared than the students they had last year (who were also limited speakers of English).

The only two groups who were new to HBJ were the current fourth and fifth graders. These were the grade levels that were assigned to the writer this year.

The educational specialist, who served as the coordinator for schools in the writer's region, identified a group of students in the fall of 1990. The students were in grades three, four or five at that time. Chapter I personnel at the district level had analyzed the group's percentile scores in reading and found a decline in scores.

The decline in reading scores made the targeted students eligible for program improvement. A plan for improvement was the result of a writing team at the practicum site designing strategies that would enable the identified students to start showing progress again (based on the district's method of using SAT scores). One of the

strategies included a reading laboratory where the students would receive reading instruction that supplemented the instruction they were receiving in the classroom. Chapter I funds were allocated so that the students could receive that additional instruction.

The effectiveness of the program improvement plan was to be monitored for three consecutive years. Each year, the most recent SAT scores for the identified students were analyzed. Chapter I personnel had advised that the sole basis for determining the success of the plan would be SAT scores. Those students whose scores had shown an increase were no longer a part of program improvement. The targeted group for program improvement changed each year when SAT scores from the previous spring were reviewed.

The writer's teaching assignment for this year concentrated on supplementing reading instruction for the remaining students who were still at the work setting. These students were scheduled to come to the reading laboratory on a daily basis for 45 minutes each session.

The writer had other responsibilities. Last year, students in grades kindergarten through second participated in a statewide reading program that was coordinated at the school site by the writer. The media specialist ordered books that were recommended for teachers to read aloud. The writer's job was to visit each class and conduct the voting for each student's favorite selection once the books

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were completed. The book marks and certificates of participation that were used as incentives were personalized and laminated by the writer. The students were given incentives and thanked for their cooperation. This activity was such a success that it was conducted again this year.

Promoting recreational reading in addition to academic reading was one of the district's goals for 1990-1991. The writer was one of two people responsible for tallying the number of books read by each class. The total number of books read by each class was read over the public address system. First, second and third place winners were displayed on the bulletin boards (the first floor for primary grades; the second floor for intermediate). First place winners had a trophy that identified their class as readers of the month.

Recreational reading was still one of the district's primary goals for 1991-1992. The county had a traveling library that visited schools that did not have a public library within walking distance of the school. The writer worked closely with the librarian who visited the practicum site. Books had to be checked out manually at the school and then entered in the county's computer system when the librarian returned to the library. The collaboration between the writer and the librarian enabled the maximum number of students to have access to additional literature.

The writer encouraged students and families of students to register for library cards and use their cards to borrow resources.

The writer was the contact person at the workplace for the foster grandparents. This position involved the writer serving as a liaison for the mentors and the program coordinator.

Chapter I made funds available for a Parent Outreach Program (POP). The writer was the teacher who was designated as the team leader for three paraprofessionals who served as Community Involvement Specialists. The major tasks included implementing activities that encouraged parental involvement; preparing packets of work so that parents could reinforce skills; attending district and feeder pattern meetings; and submitting monthly reports to the Office of Grants and Administration for Chapter I at the district level.

A writing survey was administered to a group of 71 intermediate students. Thirty of the students with the greatest number of adverse responses were identified as the practicum population. Five of these students were members of the group that had been assigned to the writer for daily supplemental instruction. However, the activities of this practicum were those conducted in addition to the writer's routine assignments.

The writer implemented the strategies of this practicum over a period of eight months. There were four half-hour blocks set aside when the total group met for writing activities. These half-hour blocks were held during the writer's planning time. Additional time was scheduled for publishing activities as needed. The writer had been given the responsibility of scheduling students into the reading laboratory. The last hour was designated as time for planning and preparation. The writer saw this hour as a time when students who took part in the practicum could receive additional assistance as needed. Scheduling of the practicum activities was designed to make the writer the person who had maximum control of practicum-related tasks.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The problem for this practicum was that there were 30 intermediate students who had adverse feelings toward writing. These 30 students were identified from a total of 71 students who responded to a writing survey by Donato (1990). One of the students transferred during the practicum. The survey included 10 statements. Students were asked to respond to each statement by selecting one of the following: never, sometimes, or always. Some of the statements presented by Donato addressed the following: pleasure experienced when completing writing tasks; difficulty faced when assignments were made; reaction to written tasks; whether or not journaling had a positive result on writing; and if refining work submitted served as a deterrent.

Problem Documentation

A group of 71 intermediate students were asked to respond to a writing survey by Donato. The responses of the 71 students that appear in Table 4 were analyzed, thereby enabling the writer to select 10 students from each grade level with the most adverse feelings. An asterisk

has been placed by the name of each member of the identified population.

Table 4

Responses from Random Sampling

Student	Never	Sometimes	Always	Student	Never	Sometimes	Always
1	0%	50%	50%	*36	40%	40%	20%
2	0%	20%	80%	*37	10%	70%	20%
3	20%	20%	60%	*38	70%	20%	10%
*4	0%	50%	10%	*39	20%	60%	20%
5	20%	30%	50%	*40	40%	50%	10%
6	10%	30%	60%	41	0%	40%	60%
7	20%	30%	50%	*42	10%	50%	40%
*8	20%	50%	30%	43	20%	30%	50%
*9	20%	40%	40%	44	20%	40%	40%
10	10%	40%	50%	*45	40%	40%	20%
*11	20%	50%	30%	46	10%	40%	50%
12	0%	50%	50%	*47	20%	50%	30%
*13	20%	40%	40%	48	0%	30%	70%
14	10%	40%	50%	49	10%	50%	40%
15	0%	30%	70%	*50	30%	50%	20%
*16	10%	50%	40%	51	40%	60%	0%
*17	40%	50%	10%	*52	20%	40%	40%
18	0%	20%	80%	53	20%	40%	40%
*19	10%	50%	40%	*54	20%	50%	30%
*20	10%	60%	30%	55	0%	40%	60%
21	0%	60%	40%	56	10%	20%	70%
*22	70%	20%	10%	57			100%
23	10%	40%	50%	*58	40%	40%	20%
24	10%	40%	50%	59			100%
25	10%	30%	60%	60		40%	60%
26	20%	30%	50%	*61	20%	40%	40%
*27	90%	10%	0%	62	10%	40%	50%
28	0%	60%	40%	63	10%	30%	60%
*29	30%	50%	20%	*64	40%	40%	20%
*30	10%	70%	20%	65	0%	30%	70%
31	10%	40%	50%	*66	30%	40%	30%
*32	20%	40%	40%	67	10%	40%	50%
33	0%	30%	70%	68	20%	40%	40%
34	0%	40%	60%	69	10%	50%	40%
35	10%	30%	60%	70	30%	30%	40%
				*71	30%	60%	10%

Once the practicum population had been identified, the writer completed a pictorial representation of the pretest scores. Figure 1 depicts the range of pretest scores for the 30 students.

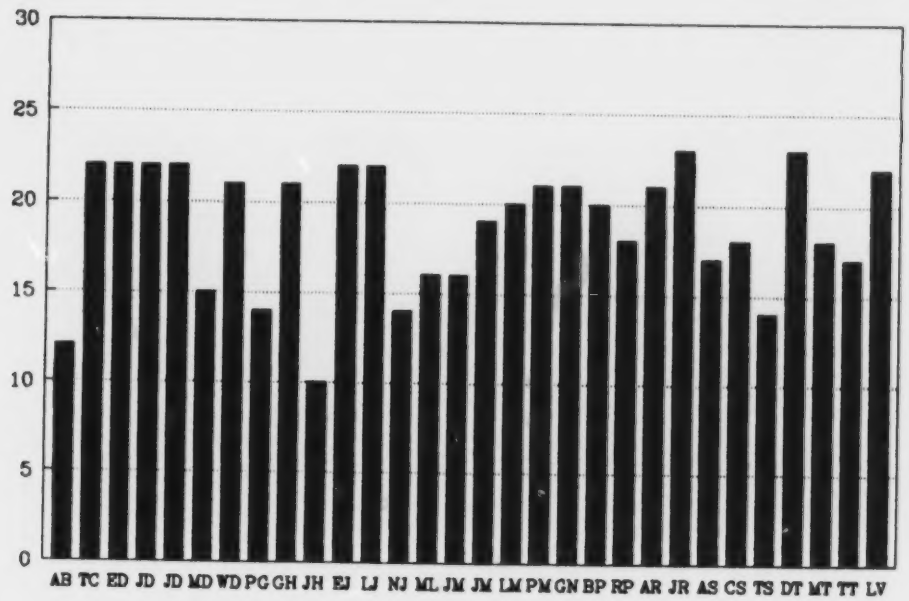

Figure 1. Distribution of pretest scores for identified group.

Responses to the writing survey provided the hard data needed to support the writer's statement of the problem. The problem was that there were 30 intermediate students who had adverse feelings toward writing.

Causative Analysis

Staring at a blank sheet of paper while anticipating the start of a written task can become an arduous task for writers who consider themselves "talented", (Tompkins & Camp, 1988). If an experienced writer were faced with this sort of hindrance, it would seem reasonable for educators to be patient with young students who were reluctant when they were given a writing assignment. The authors used the term "writer's block" to describe an experience encountered by anyone who writes. At this time, the block could be the result of not knowing how or where to start. Another hindrance could be a feeling of being overwhelmed with the task.

Spiegel (1989) suggested that writing should be taught through a "process approach". Students should understand that the process involves 1) prewriting; 2) drafting or translating and 3) revising. If for any reason writing instruction was focused on only one phase of the process; it was very important that students be made aware that the phase being presented was just one part of the process.

Spiegel noted that if students were to become effective writers, they must be given opportunities to write. Students must write for multi-reasons. The final mandate was that students must have experiences with different kinds of writing (e.g., poetry, biographies, short stories).

Writing is a significant part of any student's education. It is also an activity that can be useful beyond the school years. Therefore, this writer recognized the importance of students having encounters that would lead to wholesome attitudes for writing assignments. Tompkins and Camp made generalized statements that were very important in the development of improved writers. The writing process followed a path of collect ideas-write-rewrite-present the final product. Finally, the students must understand that prewriting was very important, it was the planning stage.

When the writer summarized the possible reasons that the target population had adverse feelings that were influencing their writing skills, the following information was taken into consideration. Tompkins and Camp (1988) reported that students experience writer's block. When given a writing task, these students look at the page and are unable to get started. Spiegel (1989) noted that writing strategies had not been presented so that students actually realized that writing was used as a means of communication that followed a procedure. Spiegel advised that students had not been able to recognize that writing was a process that incorporated prewriting, revisions, and a final product. This writer believed that the causative analysis contained three elements that could be influenced by teachers helping students cope with writer's block and

understand that writing was used for communication. Teachers were also in a position to teach the process of writing. Therefore, the writer recognized that information gleaned from the literature would be invaluable as the strategies of the practicum were implemented.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Lamb, Hewitt and Reed (1989) noted that children were interested in print. The authors suggested that some children started making marks on paper before they were a year old. This was not reported to have readers think that the child at this age had an understanding of what she or he was doing. The major purpose was to help readers understand that writing was a "natural" part of children's cognition that could be nurtured in the proper setting.

The environment for writing was very important. Lamb et al. recommended that the area should be designed in such a manner that children wanted to be a part of the environment. Teachers could become very creative in establishing the decor. Another suggestion was that the center included multitudes of literature (e.g., pamphlets, catalogs and the traditional). The material used for composing should vary, too.

When this writer read the article by Harste (1990), it was clear that the targeted audience was teachers at the very early levels of education. However, as the writer

examined the contents of the article, it was evident that Harste had made some valid points that would be applicable to the students in this practicum.

Harste made a statement that this writer encountered more than once during the review of the literature. The author suggested that "language learning is risky business. Children learn best in low-risk environments where exploration is accepted and current efforts are socially supported and understood" (p. 317).

If an educator were to heed the advice of Harste as it related to learning, classrooms would be designed in such a way that students would work at their own pace as well as work on items that stimulate their curiosity. Instruction would be planned so that children understood that writing was a developmental process.

According to Harste, children must be able to see that writing was an activity that was done by children and adults. For example, it was not enough for a teacher to give an assignment; children should be able to observe their teacher completing the assignment. There are other adults who could serve as role models; the list is infinite.

Anyone who read this article became aware that there was a degree of risk-taking in literacy development. Harste's closing remarks served as an endorsement of the risk factors involved in learning. The author's closing

remarks were most appropriate to this educator. Harste reminded educators that they should be willing to take chances.

Freeman and Sanders (1987) reported that children tended to make a determination of the importance of writing based on how they saw people using this skill. In this case, the authors decided to use settings other than those in the classroom. Children observed that people who worked in food places needed to write orders so that people would get the right food. Students who visited the library used writing to complete their assignments. Doctors wrote prescriptions so people knew what medicine to buy. These interpretations suggested that children saw there was a need for writing that went beyond the classroom environment.

When one examined the four strategies offered by Tompkins and Camp that follow, an understanding of how one could help students overcome "writer's block" became very explicit. Readers should keep one thought in mind as they examine the strategies. All of the strategies could be stressed through whole group instruction as well as cooperatively in small groups. The strategies could be used for individual instruction, too.

Brainstorming took place when students were guided in making a list of words and/or phrases that they knew about the subject. Tompkins and Camp wrote that very often

students had a wealth of knowledge that pertained to the subject at hand. Students were asked to make their lists using words as they came to mind.

Tompkins and Camp advised that brainstorming was very often used as a prewriting exercise. The practice was used with so much frequency that it became a natural strategy for adults. Brainstorming was a task that students must be taught; students should be given opportunities to practice it. Tompkins and Camp suggested that the students' initial experiences with brainstorming should be non-threatening; that is, the topics should be those that were not related to school assignments. Once students developed brainstorming, then brainstorming should be incorporated into their written exercises.

Tompkins and Camp noted that students could also use clustering as a prewriting strategy. A graphic picture that represented the main idea and supported information was presented. Teachers who assigned writing tasks that required some sort of logic found that once students mastered the skills of clustering, they (the students) were able to complete their writing assignments.

According to Tompkins and Camp, "when students need to identify, define or narrow a topic, they can freewrite" (p. 212). When students engage in freewriting, they are encouraged to write their ideas continuously. Tompkins and Camp reported that freewriting was very similar to journal

writing. Freewriting could be unfocused (where students wrote at random) or focused (where students concentrated on a particular subject).

The final strategy presented by Tompkins and Camp was cubing. Six steps were incorporated when cubing was used as a prewriting strategy. The steps included a thorough investigation of the subject.

Cubing is a diverse technique. Students must be helped to understand that each time they analyze one of the elements listed in step two, the results may differ. Tompkins and Camp suggested that students who are in the process of learning cubing as a writing strategy should be given topics that have no bearing on their assigned tasks while they are developing mastery. After the skill has been mastered, students could be asked to include school-related materials.

Tompkins and Camp concluded their article as follows:

1. Writers (those with/without experience) encounter "writer's block" periodically.

2. There are techniques that can be implemented to help any person who suffers from "writer's block".

3. Brainstorming, clustering, freewriting, and cubing are prewriting strategies that can be developed with grade school students; thereby, helping them cope with "writer's block".

Ellis (1988) cautioned against encouraging children to write for the sole purpose of having a finished product published. The type of publication that Ellis alluded to results when work was submitted for monetary rewards. The author's reason for the stated point of view was the rejection of an adult writer's work can be devastating; thereby, making the writer hesitant to submit material again. Just envision the trauma of a school-aged writer if work submitted for publication were rejected. Ellis believed that this rejection could be a contributing factor to "writer's block".

Nistler (1989) conducted a study with students at three levels; first, third and fifth. The first graders were able to identify themselves as authors because they did some writing. The older students' interpretation of an author was someone who published books.

Nistler noted that the students were not well-versed on the topic of publication. Whereas they were able to conceive that books like the ones in the libraries and book stores were published by authors; they could not transfer this concept to their individual situations.

Nistler made educators aware of the need to help students understand that they were authors. Teachers needed to guide students in realizing that their writing was intended for an audience. Publishing could be done at the school level then shared. The degree of this sharing

could become as extensive as the author and teacher deemed feasible.

Resenbrink (1987) described a learning environment that included children of varying ages who were excited about writing. This writer interpreted the setting as one of ecstasy because students were asking permission to engage in writing when their other tasks were completed.

The requests of the students say a lot about what took place in the classroom where Resenbrink guided learning. This writer envisioned a setting that was warm and conducive to learning. It was one where younger students and older students had been able to learn from each other. The setting was one that encouraged children to use their imagination as they transferred their thoughts to print. The author's reaction to the positive attitude that the children displayed elicited one reaction. According to Resenbrink, that reaction was one of jubilation.

Cramer (1978) noted that assessing children's writing may be done for three reasons. The objectives of assessing were 1) to provide children with a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction that comes through writing, 2) to provide specific criticism of an instructional nature that will foster growth in writing ability, and 3) to assign grades. The first and second objectives were the only ones that were of interest to this writer.

Cramer suggested that teachers can find something positive to say about a student's work. However, care must be taken to insure that the comments were sincere. Cramer believed that the comments were interpreted by students as a measure of their success. Therefore, this writer wanted to make a concerted effort to take many opportunities to give accolades for all levels of achievement.

The second objective dealt with the critique of writings. This writer believed that there was a place for critiques; but they were only effective if they were done tactfully. According to Cramer, children learned as the result of constructive criticism. The method of critiquing students' writings should be both oral and written. Cramer pointed out that the teacher should know when to use the appropriate method.

Cramer suggested that young children must be given the opportunity to enjoy writing. This writer found that the same consideration must be given to the target population. The author thought that older students who had developed their writing skills were better able to deal with the technicalities of their writing. This educator allowed some flexibility for this kind of critique for those who needed it. For the most part, the writer believed that the idea presented by Cramer was the one that would be followed. Children would be encouraged to get their concepts on paper. Once they realized that they had

something to say, they may have been more acceptable of the mechanics of writing. Students could master the mechanics of writing through revisiting their work. Although teachers may review the work, the students must be actively involved in what will be changed.

Lee (1987) worked with a group of elementary education majors who were reluctant about their ability to write. The author felt that the group's apprehension would have a tremendous impact on their performance in the classroom; the impact would be negative. Lee was a firm believer that teachers who did not like to write were those who would not be effective as writing teachers.

The elementary school level is perhaps the most important stage of the writing process. Lee was interested in why someone who had chosen elementary education as a career would have such negative feelings for writing. The author found that this group had had experiences during their early years that had a lasting effect. Some of them never had instruction that would help them develop writing skills. Others had teachers who placed more emphasis on spelling and punctuation rather than content. Still, others had been in situations where one topic was given for a writing task. This last practice meant that teachers failed to consider the various interests of their students.

Lee's method of altering the negative attitudes of the students was described as follows: The author designed class instruction so that students were able to see that writing was only one of the processes in the curriculum. Students were given time to take part in activities that allowed them to brainstorm, then refine their brainstorming; compose, then edit their composition. The classroom setting was one that made students want to become engulfed in their tasks. The instructor wrote as the students wrote. Suggestions on editing were made collaboratively (between teacher and student) in individual conferences. However, the final decisions were made by the students. The instructor was able to guarantee the students that whatever they presented would be accepted; thus confirming ownership for the students' writings.

Lee established a method of instruction that gave future educators hands-on experiences with a major facet of education. These students were able to change their attitudes toward writing. They were able to find strategies that could be used when they became teachers. The author became an even stronger believer that a pre-service course for education majors could be a valuable resource.

Writing is a part of communication that is a problem for some adults as well as some students. There are techniques that can help those who are reluctant overcome

their apprehension. If the techniques are mastered, then all concerned will be better prepared to enhance their skills in literacy.

Schwartz and Cramer (1989) emphasized the importance of teachers creating a method of teaching concepts in all subjects of the curriculum. The authors noted that educators should be aware that the plan may need revising (e.g., remediation for some; acceleration for others). Schwartz and Cramer presented six ideas that, if followed, would provide teachers with guidelines that will enable students to have experiences that are most conducive to learning.

Schwartz and Cramer wrote that the first task was to determine what skills needed to be presented that would help students. The second task, according to the authors, was to see that students were able to make some connection with what the teacher was teaching. This writer thought of this part of the learning process as "personalized instruction". Schwartz and Cramer advised that providing students with something that was tangible could help in developing the purpose.

The third goal was to help students understand how learning was adjusted to include stored information as needed information. Step four was helping students see the big picture. Step five involved the teacher giving students the opportunities to practice what they had

learned. Schwartz and Cramer advised that these steps did not happen incidentally; they came as the result of teacher-guided lessons. This writer was convinced that these steps would be instrumental in the success of the strategies of this practicum.

Leggo (1990) composed a list of 95 queries that could be used as a reference point for any teacher who provided students with writing skills. The writer found that the list included enough questions to address the areas of improvement needed for any educator. This writer perused the list of 95 questions and found 17 that were reviewed throughout the implementation of this practicum. It was appropriate (in this educator's opinion) that reference be made to the list of 95 for other questions not selected at this time. It was also feasible that the list of 95 be used as a resource at times other than the 8 months of implementation.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The writer's goal was to alleviate the adverse feelings that 29 intermediate students had toward writing. The writer expected the students to 1) be willing to attempt writing tasks, 2) experience pleasure when writing and 3) use strategies that would help them cope with "writer's block".

Behavioral Objectives

The behavioral objectives were prepared as the result of the writer's goal and expectations. The objectives for this practicum were as follows:

1. Upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would respond more positively on a post-writing survey by Donato (1990).
2. Upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would improve their descriptive writing assignments as determined by the writer's observation of completed tasks.
3. Upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would improve

their narrative writing assignments as determined by the writer's observation of completed tasks.

4. Upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would improve their expository writing assignments as determined by the writer's observation of completed tasks.
5. Upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would improve their persuasive writing assignments as determined by the writer's observation of completed tasks.
6. Upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would improve their poetic writing assignments as determined by the writer's observation of completed tasks.
7. Upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would have at least 1 piece of writing submitted to a children's magazine for consideration for publication.
8. Upon completion of this eight month practicum, the writer would have compiled at least four newsletters. One of the newsletters would be prepared by the practicum group and include material for other students and teachers. The other three would include tips for teachers and writing selections by the practicum group.

Measurement of Objectives

The writer had four instruments that were used to determine the achievement of the objectives. One of the instruments was a writing survey by Donato (1990). Donato's survey included 10 statements. Students were asked to circle 3 if their response to a statement was always, 2 if it were sometimes and 1 to responses that were never. The statements included reactions to pleasure experienced or difficulty faced during writing; the effect of journaling as it related to writing and how students felt about editing their work.

Another measure was teacher observation of children's writing. Students were given a prompt and asked to complete a descriptive writing assignment. The writing was assessed for content, organization and choice of words. The writer used teacher observation for other forms of writing, (e.g., narrative, expository and persuasive).

The third item that was used for measuring the objectives was the completion of at least one piece of literature for publication by each participant. The student-authored literature was to be submitted to a children's magazine for consideration for publication.

The final measurement of the objectives was to be realized with the publication of four newsletters. One of these newsletters was to be the joint effort of the target group and the writer; it was to be published and

distributed to teachers and students. The other three were to serve as resources for teachers and contain some contributions from the practicum population.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem for this practicum follows: Twenty-nine intermediate students had adverse feelings for writing. This problem was documented by responses to a writing attitude survey. A writing survey by Donato (1990) was administered to a random sampling of 71 intermediate students. Twenty-nine of the students with the most adverse responses were targeted as practicum participants. Results from the writing attitude survey proved that 29 intermediate students had adverse feelings toward writing.

The search of the literature for possible solutions made the writer aware that the problem for the practicum population was one that was shared by other students. Several sources suggested that the problem could be decreased, if not alleviated, if certain strategies were employed.

DeCiccio (1988) informed readers that the concept of collaboration as a form of instruction was not a new one. The author noted that collaboration was observed during the latter part of the 19th century. DeCiccio described the contrast between the traditional and conservative classroom. The author reported that students who were part of a traditional classroom were expected to sit and write

notes that were dictated in a lecture type setting. The lectures were followed with individual assignments that were graded by the teacher. This strategy was effective for some learners. This writer offered such an opinion as the result of teaching strategies that were employed during the writer's early school years. Some of the students became proficient, others did not.

The collaborative setting provided an alternative that offered more opportunities for success. According to DeCiccio, when students worked in a collaborative setting, the teacher's main role was to provide a climate where students experienced each phase of writing as a result of peer interaction. Each person took on the role of teacher. DeCiccio suggested that a quiet classroom was a good indication that collaboration was not in effect.

DeCiccio referred to writing as a communication tool. When one shared that theory, the use of collaborative strategies was easily understood. Children should be able to share as they complete each phase of the writing process.

Dyson (1987) made this writer realize that "children's ways of managing literacy tasks depends upon their overriding intentions, their workstyles, and the support system within which their writing takes shape" (p. 3). This one statement was interpreted by this writer as a powerful one. The writer hoped to provide various

opportunities for students to have an interest to write (e.g., for teachers, peers, and family members). Valiant efforts were made to consider the various workstyles. Students who needed to act-out what they wanted to write were encouraged to do so. The target population included students from three grade levels; therefore, collaboration was an activity that was seen as an asset for all. Dyson seemed to advocate that children needed to write for a reason. Children who wrote for a purpose and knew that purpose became better writers.

According to Hudson (1985), teachers could serve as motivators when it came to students and their writing. Some children would have a natural interest in writing. The author suggested that teachers should become aware of who these naturals were. Once the students had been identified, the teachers' next task was to realize that any writing that was done voluntarily was essential as the student experienced the various stages of writing.

Hudson believed that students whose only association with writing resulted from teacher-generated assignments were prone to have their writing skills thwarted. This was one of the negative aspects of writing that teachers could control. Teachers could help students determine who the audience would be and why there was a need to write. Teachers could also provide opportunities for students to write from ideas that ran the gamut. Hudson suggested that

when teachers established settings that included opportunities for students to write about things that the students could relate to as opposed to abstract things, the outcome may very well result in nurtured writers.

Rasinski and DeFord (1987) made it clear that the teacher whose classroom was one where students could only write during certain times and the curriculum was more teacher-centered instead of student-centered was one where students did not become as involved in the writing. In contrast, Rasinski and DeFord recommended a setting where there was more flexibility in the use of resources. It was also suggested that students and teachers should have a voice in planning the lessons. This second example is more like one where children are motivated to take part in a holistic approach to writing.

Teachers are often tempted to give students a topic and ask them to write about it. Calkins (1983) suggested that this was a sure way to get papers that prohibited the development of writing skills. As an alternative, teachers could show their students how ideas could be developed. For example, the teacher could bring in an item that stimulated an interest. When students asked questions, the teacher could list them. When the writing task was started, the teacher could include responses to questions that were asked.

The teacher has demonstrated a technique that could be effective for students. Instead of the teacher assigning topics, students could be asked to take turns bringing in objects. Peers could provide questions that would offer guidelines for stories.

Fuller (1987) has convinced this writer that a holistic form of scoring was the best way to evaluate the writing that the target group produced. By using a holistic form of scoring, the writer looked at the total picture of what the students had to convey.

Balajthy (1986) noted that teachers should be aware that the idea of revision can be rejected by students. Just the same, the mechanics of writing is an issue that must be addressed. This does not mean that mechanics should be a number one objective. Balajthy recommended that the teacher who refused to believe that revising work was something that students did on a voluntary basis was one who would have students that did very few revisions. According to the author, students go through the writing process gradually. Teachers who provided students with a multitude of skills would cause students to lose interest in writing.

So far, the writer has made reference to students revising their work. Balajthy wrote that when students revised their work, it usually entailed checking for misspellings and sentence structure. Revising differed

from editing. Editing, on the other hand, included technicalities referred to in revision as well as the process of making the writing publishable.

Balajthy suggested that teachers give students guidelines to follow when they revise/edit work. These guidelines can be posted on a checklist. The author recommended that once students started implementing a skill that had been placed on the checklist regularly, that skill should be removed.

Making adjustments to writing was not a task that could be considered as a favorite of novice writers. Therefore, during the initial writing stages, teachers must insure students that making the needed revisions would not be a task that was given in addition to other tasks. Instead, Balajthy urged teachers to allow time in the regular schedule for students to revisit their writing.

There are other recommendations made by Balajthy. These include giving children sufficient time to complete their work and being willing to allow more time for those students who need more time. The author advised that if teachers can not give the students the time they need to revisit their work; then students would not use this strategy (revising) that is very important in the writing procedure.

Balajthy wrote that if students felt good about what they were writing, in all likelihood, they would be more

willing to revise their work. Excelling in a task serves as a motivator. This motivator may be what each student needs to be able to write.

Writing is a form of communication. Writers must be made aware that when their writing is published, it serves as a means of them conveying messages to others. Balajthy noted that seeing a completed task may serve as the goal for students completing their assignment.

Balajthy reported that children need to have an audience respond to their work. The method of responding could be established through modeling that was done by the teacher. Eventually, students would follow the role of the teacher.

Some of the activities of this practicum involved students creating poetry. At first, the writer felt there was a need to familiarize the students with the various types of poetry. This opinion was changed when the writer viewed some of the concepts of Crosby (1962). According to the author,

> THE ONLY TRUE POETS (sic) are children, someone has said. Their fascination with language, their "built-in" ability to use it in unique and original ways, their skill in making language work for them in conveying their experiences and their thoughts are most pronounced among the very young. (p. v)

Crosby felt that the problems evolved when adults interfered.

Language development can be fostered, as reported by Crosby. Teachers and parents can become instrumental in this nurturing. Crosby advised that good teachers are able to recognize the elements needed to insure that each student responds to nurturing. These elements, as suggested by Crosby, occur in a "climate which fosters freedom to explore, discover, and dream; opportunities to share emotions, thoughts and ideas; and skills which conserve rather than squander the creative powers of children" (p. v).

One of the main goals of this practicum was to improve the writing abilities of the identified group. There was a need to have the students become more involved in activities that were oriented toward writing. Larter, Braganca and Rukavina (1986) did research and offered the following advice. Students who had an opportunity to use computers were given an easy method of revising information that had been produced. Students were able to publish material that they could feel good about.

Black (1989) reported that computers could serve as motivators for reluctant writers. Children seemed to lose all track of time. They could receive assistance from peers. The teacher changed from a person who told the

student what to do to one who facilitated as students completed their writing.

Hollandsworth (1988) described the introvert writer as one who followed the traditional rules for writing. This type of writer found it necessary to have a plan before the writing process was started and was known to add more details to his/her plan before completing the writing assignment. The introvert preferred to work alone; however, she/he would ask peers and/or the teacher for assistance.

The extrovert, on the other hand, was able to discuss his/her thoughts with others and take advantage of suggestions received. This type of writer could just sit and let ideas flow. Once the ideas were on paper (Hollandsworth referred to this as freewriting), the extrovert made an attempt to outline his/her thoughts. The writer who has characteristics of an extrovert is able to work collaboratively during the revision of his/her assignment.

At the onset of this practicum, the writer was able to say that based upon the apprehension detected as a result of the writing attitude survey (Donato, 1990), all of the members of the practicum population were introverts. The solution for this practicum included techniques that would, hopefully, reduce the apprehension of the students. Therefore, at the end of eight months when the post-

attitudinal survey was given, the nurtured writers would have characteristics that were more like those of extroverts.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer realized that there was a need for creative and innovative strategies if the identified students were to experience success. This realization enabled the writer to solicit information from several resources that would make for a feasible learning environment. The outcome was the solution strategy that follows.

DeCiccio (1988) made this writer aware of the need to encourage students to work in an environment where collaboration was promoted. Dyson (1987) received credit for this educator's decision to assess students on an individual basis. Hudson (1985) was responsible for this writer using teacher-student conferences to help students realize that styles of writing vary as the audiences vary. Rasinski and DeFord (1987) as well as Calkins (1983) suggested that students should be encouraged to use topics of interest when they completed their assignments. Balajthy (1986) noted that the task of revision was one that should be approached with care so as not to deter writing interests. Fuller (1987) was the resource that made this writer more concerned with assessing the students' writings from a holistic stand point. This

technique made it possible for the task to be examined for content more than mechanics.

Computers were available at the writer's work location. Larter et al. (1986) and Black (1989) recommended that computers should be used for publishing children's work. There were varying levels of ages and abilities of students in the practicum population. Therefore, a concept by Resenbrink (1987) was employed as the writer allowed for periods of times other than those that were scheduled for the group for students to complete their tasks.

The solution strategies were established so that the outcomes would result in learning experiences for the writer as well as the practicum population. The writer anticipated professional growth as the result of consulting resource people who could help with the mastery of using holistic scoring as an assessment of writing. There were inservices and conferences throughout the year. The writer attended some of those activities to garner information that could be used by the writer and other colleagues. Another activity that could help the writer was networking with teachers at other schools with successful writing programs where children's works were being published.

The writer knew that there were some activities members of the target group were expected to accomplish. Therefore, the solution strategy was created to provide

the support needed to help the group succeed. Members of the practicum population had opportunities to:

1. publish their writing;
2. share their writings with others;
3. read their writings to younger students;
4. provide copies of writings to classes for inclusion in class libraries;
5. have samples of their work shared with educators on a national level;
6. work collaboratively in a student-centered environment;
7. have the writer serve in the role of facilitator;
8. have access to computers at times other than those scheduled as needed;
9. use The Children's Writing and Publishing Center (1989) as a desk top publishing.

Report of Action Taken

The writer spent 8 months working with a group of 29 intermediate students whose responses to a writing attitude survey suggested that the writer would need to find techniques to motivate writing. The original target group included 30 students. One of the students transferred to another school before the practicum activities were over. The original plan was to provide students with four strategies - brainstorming, clustering, freewriting, and

cubing. The writer was able to provide instruction in the first three strategies; there was not enough time for the fourth. Therefore, the plan was one that adhered to the program that follows:

1. Use some type of audio/visual resource as an ice breaker.
2. Model the skill and solicit contributions from the students.
3. Develop a story based on information obtained in step two.
4. Encourage students to offer titles for the story and use a majority vote to choose one.
5. Assign groups to work on stories.
6. Confer with groups and assist as needed.
7. Provide each group with time to use The Children's Writing and Publishing Center.
8. Encourage students to illustrate stories.
9. Laminate and bind completed group stories.
10. Encourage students to repeat steps five through nine as they work in pairs.
11. Follow steps five through nine for students who chose to complete individual writings.

The instructional objective for the first quarter was to help members of the target group use brainstorming as a strategy with each form of writing: descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic. Students

viewed "The Red Balloon". When the film was over, students were advised that they were going to participate in a brainstorming activity. The writer started the activity and encouraged students to add their contributions. All of the responses were recorded on a piece of chart paper. The brainstorming activity was completed during the second day.

When the students met on Wednesday, the writer explained what descriptive writing was. Following the explanation, the writer reviewed the list of ideas that was generated on the first two days. A volunteer was asked to select one of the ideas from the list.

The writer explained to the students that this idea was going to be used to write a story. This activity was recorded on chart paper. Members of the practicum population were asked to read the story with the writer. A request was made for suggestions for a title for the story. Three suggestions were provided. Students were told that they were going to choose the title that they liked best. The title that received the most votes was the one selected.

After the writer had modeled the activity, the students were given the opportunity to complete a task. The group had to work collectively to come up with a concept for a story. Once the concept was selected, the students took turns dictating a story that was recorded by the writer.

This first week served as an orientation period for the group. The writer's purpose for implementing this procedure was to provide the group with teacher-supported experiences.

Students were divided into groups of six at the first meeting of the second week. The groups included two third graders, two fourth graders and two fifth graders. This cross-grade level grouping provided the maximum opportunities for students to use the skills of each other as resources. There was a recorder for each group. The tasks of the recorder included getting the group's journal and recording the information contributed by the group.

The students were asked to review the stories from the first week. The students were also asked to look at the list that had been composed during the previous week and decide if they would use one of the concepts from the list to develop their group's story or come up with a concept of their own.

The groups worked on their individual stories. The writer moved from group to group and provided encouraging remarks. These remarks seemed to be needed for the students who were somewhat reluctant.

Group conferences were conducted once the students made the writer aware that their stories were completed. What was important to this educator was the students' understanding that they had written ideas that could be

read. Students were given assistance with spelling corrections during the conference. They also received assistance in selecting a title for their work.

Once the students agreed that their story was as they had intended it to be, they were given paper to start their illustrations. The writer told the students that their stories would be typed for them this time. This decision was made so that practicum participants could see the outcome of their published work and establish some sense of anticipation of what they were capable of producing. When the illustrations were completed, books were bound. Bound books were shared by the group.

The students continued brainstorming activities to create stories in groups of two. This time they were introduced to The Children's Writing and Publishing Center. This software had been purchased for the writer's Tandy laptop. The laptop was the only computer for the major part of the practicum activities. Therefore, the students needed more time than was originally anticipated to complete their publishing. The computer that had been ordered for the reading laboratory was not available. The computers in the computer laboratory were being used by students who had scheduled classes during the last hour of the day.

Learning the keyboard was a new task for the group. The important things for the writer to convey to the

students were the use of the shift key for capital letters and the space bar for separating words. The task of finding the various letters was the responsibility of the students. In most instances, the students who were waiting their turn at the computer served as directors to tell the person doing the typing where the letter was located or help the person keep up with his or her place on the page. This technique proved to be successful. The final product was a piece of literature that had been completed by the students.

The procedure described in the previous pages was followed for the other writing activities. For example, the writer modelled a narrative writing. The students worked in groups of six to complete a narrative and then in pairs.

Most of the students contributed to the narrative writings. They seemed to be comfortable as they completed their writing tasks. However, the writer felt the need to provide the students with another visual as they were introduced to the second phase of the practicum.

The instructional objective for phase two was to help members of the target group use clustering as a strategy with each form of writing. The film viewed was "Magic Pony Ride". After two teacher-guided lessons in clustering, the students worked in small groups of six. The group assignments remained the same as they were for

the brainstorming activities. The writer followed the format of small group conferences as a method of assessing the students' work.

Students continued to work on illustrations for their stories. However, this time, the writer made photocopies of the uncolored copies. This provided multiple copies of stories that could be shared with other students. The other activities for the clustering activities followed the format of those for brainstorming.

The final strategy introduced to members of the target population was freewriting. The instructional objective for this strategy was to help members of the target group use freewriting as a strategy with each form of writing: descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic. The writer modelled a lesson on freewriting. After the demonstration, students worked in groups of six (as they had done in the previous strategies).

Students were encouraged to work in pairs. However, many students had progressed to a point where they were willing to try writing activities on their own. It is this writer's belief that the strategy of "freewriting" gave students the extra confidence needed.

The introduction of this strategy could not have taken place at a more opportune time. The writer's state was hosting the International Reading Association's (IRA's) conference during the spring. Various school districts

that had Chapter I students were asked to make contributions to the conference. The contributions were to be given as souvenirs at one of the luncheons.

The writer's involvement with this project came about as part of the job responsibilities of a reading teacher. Five students made contributions. One of the students was a member of the group that came to the reading laboratory as well as one who was a member of the practicum population. The other four were members of the target population.

The writer's job responsibilities were such that there was a degree of flexibility. There were times when the writer was away from the work place. All of the absences were positive in that the writer was able to garner information on a first hand basis from educators in the language arts field. The experiences during the practicum period included the following:

1. attendance at the state level reading conference;
2. attendance at the district level reading conference;
3. attendance at the national level reading conference;
4. delegate at a district-wide conference that emphasized educating children at-risk;
5. inservice workshops that demonstrated strategies that could help teachers implement all facets of the whole language reading program.

The outcomes of the aforementioned experiences are as follows. The writer expressed an interest in contributing (as needed) to the state's reading conference during the fall of 1992. The writer will serve as a presenter of one of the speakers during the conference.

The writer had served as a member of the writing team for the school's Chapter I plan for the 1992-1993 school term. The visit to the IRA conference enabled the writer to visit the booths of various vendors between sessions. During one of the visits, the writer was able to find literature on Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) and the counterpart Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test (SDMT). Both of these items had been mentioned as resources that could be used to develop basic skills for students in the plan. All the writing team had were the acronyms for the resources. What the writer offered the team was the literature that provided information about the resources as well as details needed for ordering. Therefore, the members of the writing team were appreciative of the literature.

The two activities mentioned above had the writer as a contributor. On the other hand, the writer was the recipient of valuable information that could be used as efforts are made to stay attuned to trends in language arts.

The supplies needed to make this practicum a success were easily accessible. Crayons and paper were available through the art teacher. Ribbons needed for the computer were provided by the paraprofessional in the computer laboratory.

The resources needed were somewhat limited. A computer was ordered in November for the reading laboratory. However, the computer did not arrive until late spring. When it did arrive, it was connected to the Jostens Learning System in the computer laboratory.

The writer was very fortunate to have a laptop. A personal copy of The Children's Writing and Publishing Center that was IBM compatible had been purchased. Members of the practicum group were enthusiastic about publishing. They were extremely cooperative in accepting the adjustments that were needed due to limited resources.

There were various facilities used during the practicum. When the students viewed the films, there was no problem in moving the tables and having students sit on the carpet or in the chairs that were available. However, when the writer needed to meet with the total group for writing activities, the students met in one of two kindergarten classrooms.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem for this practicum was that there were 30 intermediate students who had adverse feelings toward writing. These 30 students were identified from a total of 71 students who responded to a writing survey that was administered by the writer. The survey was created by Donato (1990) and included 10 statements. Students were asked to respond to each statement by selecting one of the following: never, sometimes, or always. Some of the statements presented by Donato addressed the following: pleasure experienced when completing writing tasks; difficulty faced when assignments were made; reaction to written tasks; whether or not journaling had a positive result on writing; and if refining work submitted served as a deterrent. It is important to note that one student transferred during the implementation of the practicum.

In order for the practicum design to be effective, the writer had to find a method to make the students feel confident to attempt writing tasks. This method included modeling tasks for the students, providing constant feedback on work and making a computer available for published work.

There were a total of eight objectives. Six of the objectives were achieved as anticipated. One objective was met to some degree.

Objective one was that upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would respond more positively on a post-writing survey by Donato (1990). This objective was achieved by 27 of the students. The data in Figure 2 represents the individual responses for third graders. Two of the students had scores that did not change during the two periods of assessment. There was also a fourth grader whose scores did not change (see Figure 3). All of the fifth graders had scores that showed an increase in attitude as depicted in Figure 4.

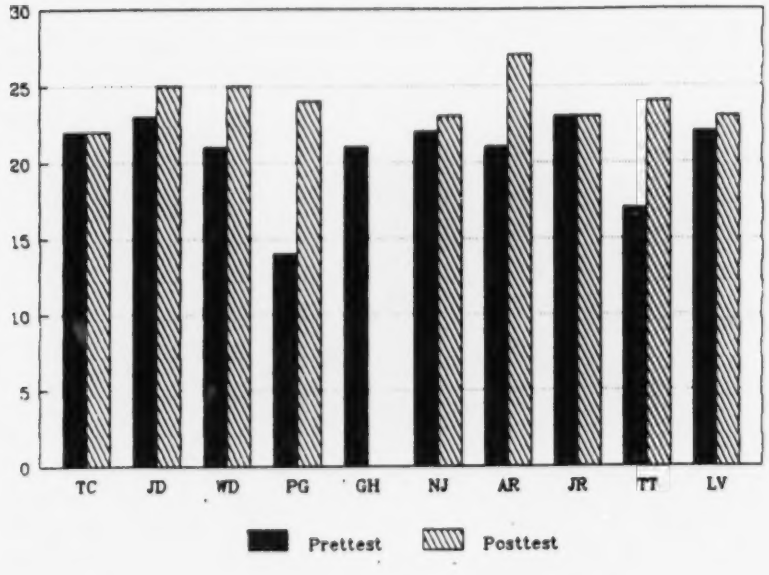

Figure 2. Pre-Post comparison for third graders.

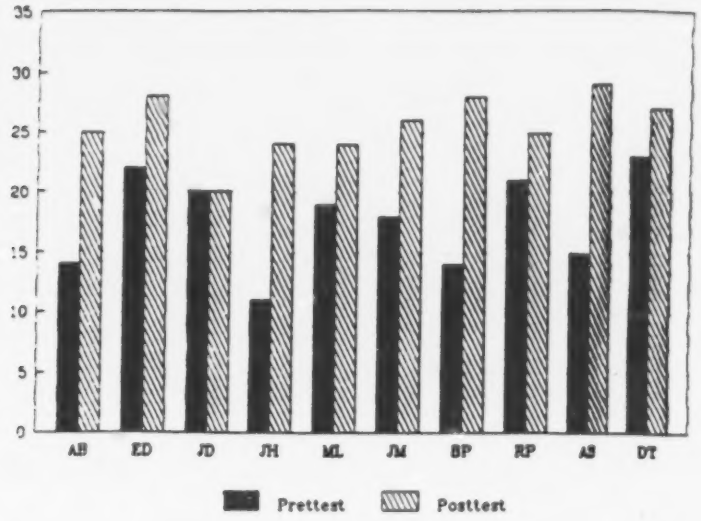

Figure 3. Pre-Post comparison for fourth graders.

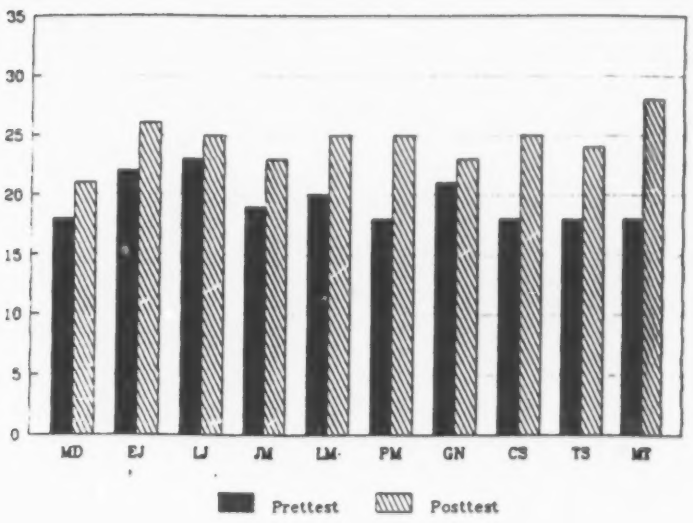

Figure 4. Pre-Post comparison for fifth graders.

Figure 5 depicts a pre-post comparison of scores by grade level. When all scores were averaged, the writer was able to document the successful completion of objective one.

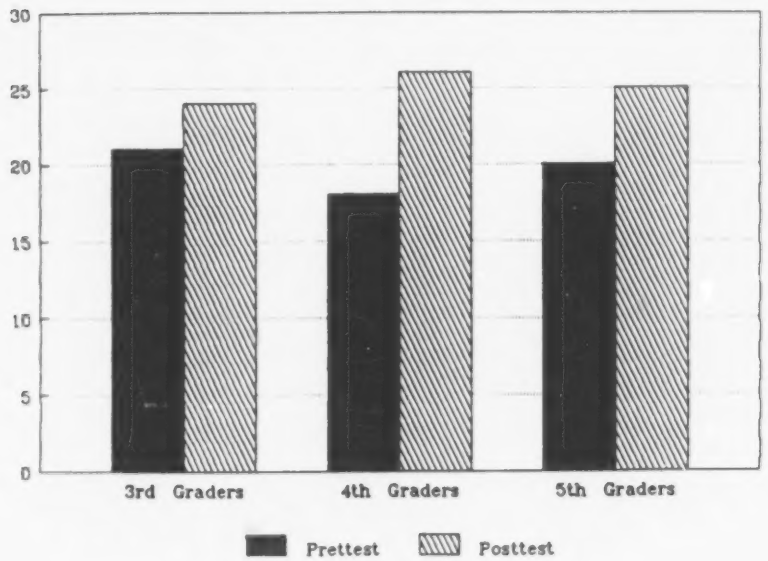

Figure 5. Pre-Post comparison of scores by grade levels.

Objectives two through six described the group's successful completion of the following types of writings: descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive, and poetic. Teacher observation was used to assess the completion of the objectives. There was constant monitoring of the assignments. The fact that students were able to present a written activity for each skill enables this writer to say that upon completion of participation in a special tutoring program, 29 students had improved their descriptive,

narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic writing assignments.

Objective seven was not accomplished during the implementation of the practicum activities. The objective was that upon completion of 8 months of participation in a special tutoring program, all 29 students would have at least 1 piece of writing submitted to a children's magazine for consideration for publication.

The writer is expecting most of the practicum participants to return to the work site for the 1992-1993 school year. Those students who respond positively to a questionnaire (Appendix A:78) will be encouraged to continue their writing activities. Assistance would be provided to insure that students have the names and addresses of possible publishers and whatever else is needed to complete this task.

Objective eight was not achieved. Upon completion of this eight month practicum, the writer had not compiled at least four newsletters. The successful completion of this objective will be realized as the writer works with student representatives who will compile newsletters on a regular basis. The newsletters will include writings from the entire student body.

Six of the eight objectives were achieved. Those that were not achieved will be continued as on-going projects. The writer's goal was to alleviate the adverse feeling that

30 students (one of whom transferred) had toward writing. The information in Table 5 proves that although adverse feelings were not alleviated, they were greatly reduced. Therefore the practicum activities were successful.

Table 5

Number of Negative Responses to Survey

Writing was seen as:

	Pre	Post
a pleasurable activity;	4	3
a task that was accomplished with minimal effort;	4	1
an effective means of communication;	7	0
something they took pride in;	8	1
a skill that improves with practice;	9	5
a finished activity that could be exchanged through cooperative events;	13	3
an activity that was made better as the result of editing;	12	1
a way of record-keeping that was fun as well as a chance to improve writing skills;	7	3
a task they were able to complete;	11	1
an enjoyable activity.	3	1

Note: The information in this table was adapted from a Student Writing Attitude Survey by Marjorie Donato, Ed.D.

Discussion

The report of the outcome objectives proves the success that members of the practicum experienced. Writing

is an activity that this educator enjoys. It is also an activity that the writer has always been able to achieve with ease. Therefore, it was important that the writer rely on the experts to help practicum participants have every chance possible for success.

Some of the most important contributions follow. Tompkins and Camp (1988) reminded readers that writer's block is a problem that even the most experienced writer faces. Therefore, the writer was understanding of students who needed more time to start their writing activities. At this point, this educator was able to concur with Spiegel (1989) who suggested that students be taught writing through stages. Lamb et al. (1989) acknowledged that children have a natural interest in writing. When that interest is nurtured, skilled writers evolve.

Harste (1990) reiterated the fact that children develop at various level. This concept was very important as each student made his or her contribution to completed writings. This educator was concerned that the students understood that their act of contributing print to a concept made them authors. Nistler (1989) urged educators to help convey this concept.

Collaboration was one of the most important strategies of this practicum. DeCiccio (1988) described the strategy as one that made the chances of success more possible. According to Dyson (1987) the writer could serve as part of

a support system that was needed as the students completed writing activities.

Hudson (1983) encouraged educators to serve as motivators. This educator believes that this task was achieved when teacher demonstrations enabled the writer to show an interest in writing. Members of the practicum group were able to select their topics for writing assignments. The aforementioned practice was in agreement with the theory of Calkins (1983). Calkins suggested that when topics are assigned, levels of creativity are stifled.

Students did go through the process of revising their work. Balajthy (1986) advised teachers that this was not a process that students did on a voluntary basis. The writer encouraged students to get their ideas on paper. Once the ideas were written, revisions were made in red. When the students typed their work, they knew how to identify the revisions. The final product was work that was publishable.

When the writer reflects on the activities of Practicum II, it is very easy to find satisfaction in the outcome. There were times when the students had to be very flexible and move from one kindergarten classroom to the other. Sometimes when the writer met with half of the students, some of the students had to work on the carpet.

One of the fourth graders made the writer aware of the impact the practicum activities were having on him. During

the second month of the practicum, the writer received a card that read,

> Dear Ms. McKenzie
>
> During the holidays I am thankful for many things you have give me and than you for being nice to me and thank you for tiping. this is your gift.
>
> McKenzie

form: (name of student)
to: McKenzie

The student had a message to convey and used writing to convey it. Although there were nine other students in the class, they did not respond in the same way.

The feelings of the remaining students have already been documented collectively. However, the writer believes that a grade by grade comparison of negative, neutral and positive responses will serve as an endorsement of success. The pre-post comparisons are in Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10 and Figure 11.

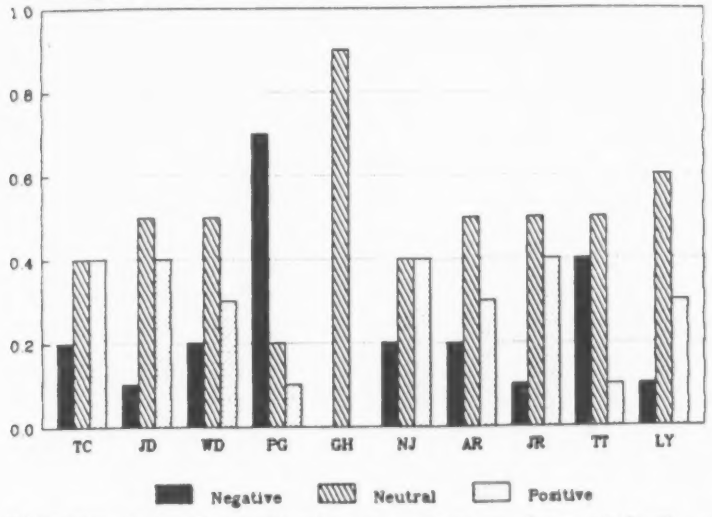

Figure 6. Pre-Test responses for third grade.

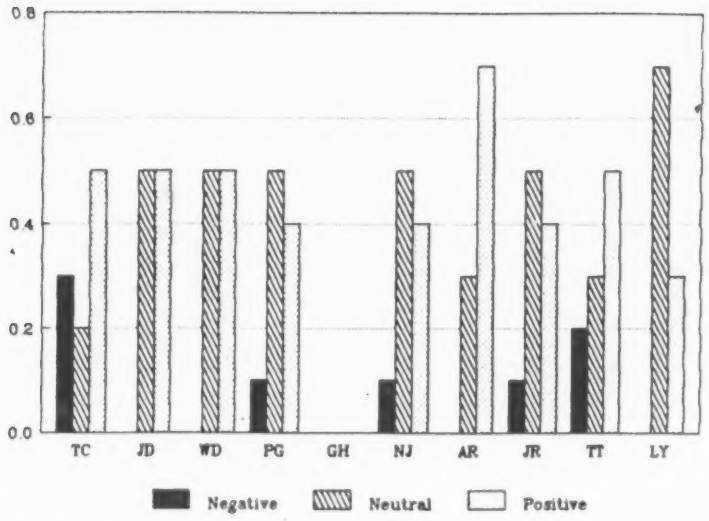

Figure 7. Post-Test responses for third grade.

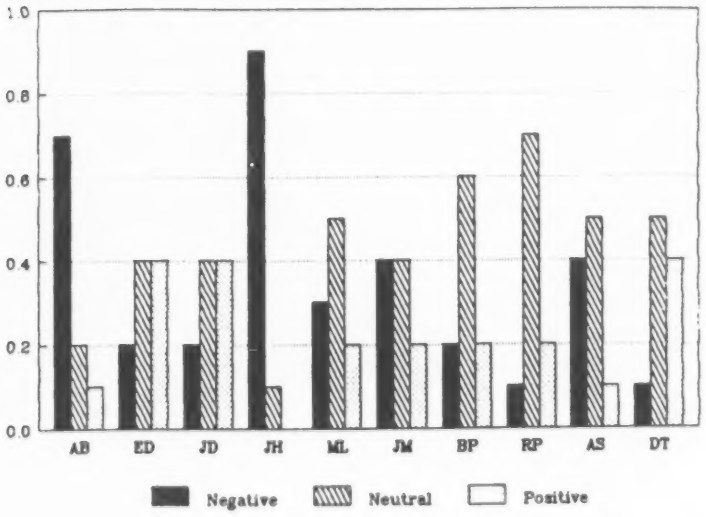

Figure 8. Pre-Test responses for fourth grade.

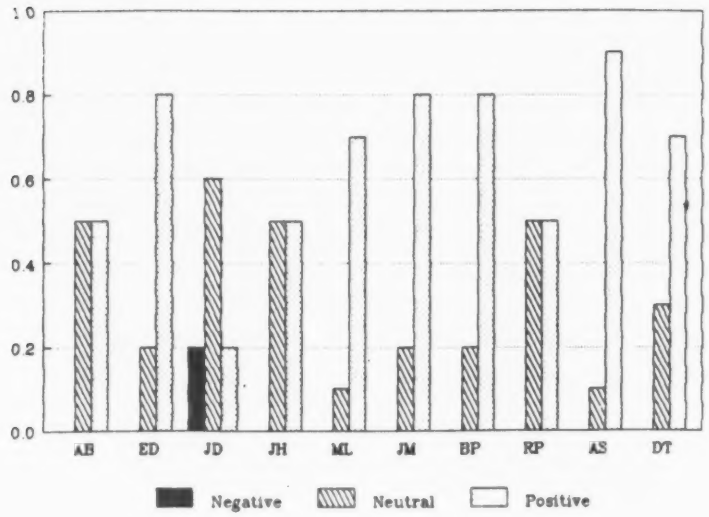

Figure 9. Post-Test responses for fourth grade.

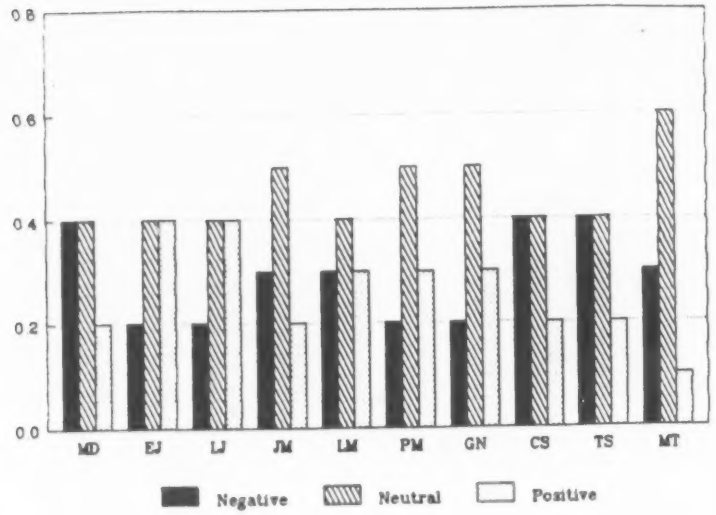

Figure 10. Pre-Test responses for fifth grade.

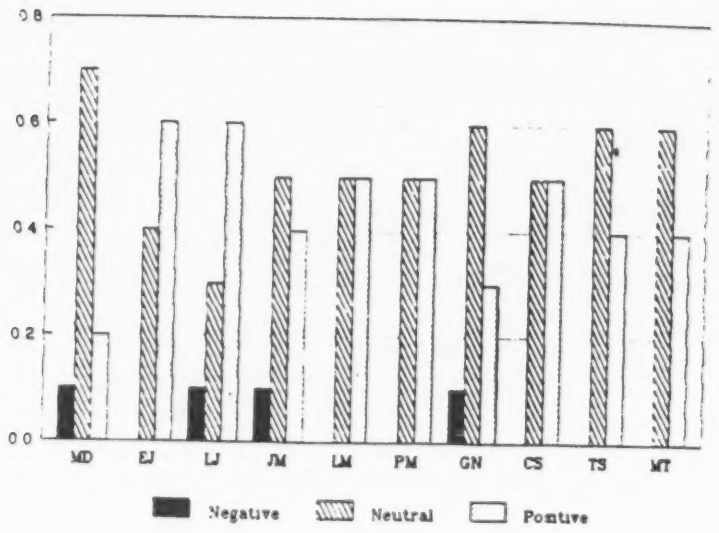

Figure 11. Post-Test responses for fifth grade.

Recommendations

The recommendations that are presented below are based on the completion of an eight month practicum that saw the adverse attitudes toward writing decrease for some students. Other students had negative attitudes that were alleviated.

The only way that this writer was aware of the feelings of the group was the result of the students responding to an attitudinal survey. A pre/post assessment was administered. The writer was able to note the changes in attitudes. Therefore, one of the first recommendations would be to find a method of measuring how students feel

about writing. Data from the measure can be beneficial in helping educators establish strategies for students.

Another recommendation would be to provide students with a visual during the initial stages of writing. The writer found that this technique served as a motivator for those students who may have been inclined to say "I do not know what to write about".

It is recommended that students work in cooperative learning groups during writing activities. The writer found that the thought of using a group of six provided students with a support system. This support system enabled students to move from group writing to buddy writing. Some of the students felt confident enough to attempt individual writing.

Modeling was a very important part of these practicum activities. Not only did the writer show students what they were expected to do, these students were shown how to do it. Students were encouraged to make contributions to the teacher-originated writings. Therefore, modeling is a technique that the writer would advised teachers to use.

In some schools, students have easy access to computers. This was not the case at the practicum site. There were computers in the computer laboratory. However, classes were scheduled into the laboratory all day. There were two computers in the school's media center. When one thinks of scheduling students to use just these two

computers, the task can seem somewhat impossible. The lack of computers did not prohibit the writer from suggesting that students should have access to them during writing activities.

One might question the writer's recommendation that students have access to technology during writing activities. The rationale for such a suggestion is that there is software that makes publishing very easy. Those students who were in the practicum group displayed a great sense of achievement for each story that they typed.

The writer's final recommendation is that young writers should have opportunities to share their work. Copies of stories can be given to the appropriate grade levels at the school. This writer also believes that young writers will recognize the importance of their work if published material is shared with outside audiences (e.g., children's wards of hospitals and day care centers). This educator is in favor of submitting children's writing to magazines for consideration for publication. However, it is very important that children understand that the mere act of submitting one's work does not guarantee that the publishers will accept it.

Dissemination

There were two activities that were not completed during the eight month period. These activities will be

continued during the school year. The writer has a new administrator for the 1992-1993 school year. A pre-planning conference was held during the summer school session. During the course of the meeting, the administrator became aware of the writer's progress in the doctoral program and what the writer's plans are as these post-practicum activities are completed.

One of the on-going activities will be the development of a writing club. This was one of the plans that the writer had considered. However, upon review of the Chapter I team's report after a visit to the workplace, the writer discovered that developing a writing club was also a recommendation of the reading supervisor for the district. Therefore, there will be a writing club for all students who will be assigned to the reading laboratory for the 1992-1993 school. A total of 30 students have been projected for the laboratory.

The writer will administer a pre-post writing survey to the students. This survey will provide valuable information regarding the attitudes of the students prior to and after eight months of writing activities.

The former third and fourth grade participants for the completed project are expected to be at the practicum site for the 1992-1993 school year. The writer will contact these students and their families at the beginning of the school year (Appendix B:80). The purpose of the

communication would be to invite the students to become members of a writing guild. Once the writer is aware of the number of students in the writer's guild, the other schools in the feeder pattern will be contacted (Appendix C:82). An informational meeting will be scheduled during the first nine weeks to establish the objectives of the guild.

Although the majority of the activities would involve elementary students writing for their peers, there are two other projects that this writer plans to initiate. One is a school newspaper. The other is a school year book. The software is available for the first. However, this writer believes that the cross-age tutoring that can be provided by middle and senior high school students will be valuable. The tutoring can nurture students who display an interest in writing as well as provide those who tutor with additional responsibilities.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you ever write stories, poems or jokes when you have leisure time? Yes No

2. Would you like to share the things that you have written with others at this school? Yes No

3. Would you like to share the things that you have written with others in this county? Yes No

4. Would you like to share the things that you have written with others in this country? Yes No

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO FORMER PARTICIPANTS/PARENTS

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO FORMER PARTICIPANTS/PARENTS

Dear _____,

Last year, your child spent eight months doing some special writing activities with me. I will be continuing writing activities with a group of students this year.

Some of my plans include a newspaper for students that will be written by students. Your child will also have the opportunity to work on creating different kinds of writings. Please indicate if you and your child are interested in knowing more about the activities and return the bottom part of this note to me.

Sincerely,

F. I. McKenzie

____ Please send me more information.

____ I am unable to participate at this time, but my child is interested.

____ We are unable to participate at this time.

APPENDIX C

MEMORANDUM TO SCHOOLS IN FEEDER PATTERN

APPENDIX C

MEMORANDUM TO SCHOOLS IN FEEDER PATTERN

TO: School Personnel in (name of area) Feeder Pattern
FROM: F. I. McKenzie
SUBJECT: Special Writing Activities

During the 1991-1992 school year, I implemented a practicum project with a group of intermediate students. The students were identified based on their responses to a writing survey. I am including a modified version of the survey.

I met with the students on a weekly basis. Most of them were able to respond with positive or neutral reactions to the statements on the post survey. The students' reactions convinced me that maybe there were some young writers in our feeder pattern who could benefit from nurturing.

I will be working with a group of our students this year. The students will be selected based on their responses to the enclosed survey. My proposed goal is to use the students in grades four and five to serve as role models for those students in grades one, two, and three. This way, there is a greater chance that we will always have some experienced writers.

My main purpose for sending this memorandum is to see if there are other schools in the area with similar interests. If you have a program in place, please share this information with me. If you feel that this is a project that has some potential for our feeder pattern, I would appreciate your reaction to the concept.

I am anxiously awaiting your response so that we can make arrangements for future plans.